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General Assembly

Official Records

Sixty-third session

94th plenary meeting
Monday, 6 July 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Cujba (Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 105 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(j) Confirmation of the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/891)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, by its decision 59/419 of 11 May 2005, the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, confirmed the appointment of Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for a term of office of four years, beginning on 1 September 2005 and ending on 31 August 2009.

In paragraph 2 of his note, the Secretary-General proposes to extend the appointment of Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for another term of office of four years, beginning on 1 September 2009 and ending on 31 August 2013.

I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Bailly (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like from the outset to seize this opportunity, Sir, to reiterate once again its great appreciation and admiration for President D'Escoto Brockmann's continued and effective commitment in the service of the Member States to accomplishing the tasks assigned to the General Assembly under his presidency.

My delegation aligns itself with the Group of African States and the Group of 77 (G-77) and China, and takes the floor to make some preliminary remarks and to clarify its position on the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Our comments are primarily concerned with the process of appointing the holder of the said post and the issue of the length of the mandate of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

As a country that presented a candidate, we would like to make known our reservations on the negotiation process that took place a few months ago for the endorsement by the G-77 and China of a candidate to be presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for confirmation by the General Assembly.

Without going into detail, we wish to emphasize here that we do not appreciate the way in which the negotiation process was conducted, tainted as it was by a surfeit of confusion that left the way open for tendentious interpretations and misunderstandings, which we must try to resolve if we are more effectively to improve in the future the current system of rotation

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so as to ensure balanced and transparent regional representation within UNCTAD.

In that regard, the debate on the duration of the Secretary-General's mandate must be more clearly defined in order to avoid conflicts that ultimately are not necessary in light of the prevailing spirit of solidarity and fraternity within the G-77 and China.

Even if healthy competition is sometimes necessary to take best advantage of the strengths of the G-77, we believe that such competition should follow even clearer and more precise criteria to avoid engaging in conflicting interpretations of texts and reaching agreements that could resemble bargaining, which most often in such cases, it must be agreed, are not fruitful since they are divisive and do not provide real answers to one another's concerns.

It is because there are no clear regulated provisions for the issuance of two consecutive four-year mandates that there inevitably arise confused impulses regarding the post or discussions directly or indirectly challenging the apparently established practice of enshrining two consecutive mandates for the holder of the position of UNCTAD Secretary-General. There should be a substantive debate on that important issue so as to put everyone at ease and to avoid prejudging the choice of Secretary-General with regard to the position of the G-77 and China. As everything is inextricably connected, it is important that clarifications be made in that regard through a more consultative approach.

Our delegation's position is as follows. We take this opportunity to confirm that, with respect to this issue, from the outset we have adhered to the principled position that consultations should be held at the highest level within the African Union in order to identify Africa's view on the appointment of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. For us, this has been an issue of principle on which we must not compromise, since our country had submitted its candidature and won the timely support of many member States by the end of the African summit in Libya for undertaking the high-level consultations needed to reach a decision.

During that campaign, the ethical values that inform and guide the actions of the United Nations throughout the world were overthrown by personal attacks, unfounded allegations and defamatory and hostile practices against the worthiness of our candidate, who had to bring judicial proceedings against the authors of such practices in order to ensure that justice had been served.

Now that the African summit in Sirte is behind us, our delegation would like to announce officially that Côte d'Ivoire supports the Secretary-General's choice to renew the mandate of the current holder of the post in the understanding that, at the end of Mr. Supachai's second mandate, an African representative will head UNCTAD so as to restore the sorely needed balance in the fair representation of regional groups within UNCTAD.

Our delegation solemnly declares Côte d'Ivoire's support for Thailand and wishes Mr. Supachai full success in discharging his duty as head of UNCTAD in the coming years.

To conclude, our delegation would like to thank and congratulate the Chair of the G-77 and China, the Permanent Representative of the Sudan, for his tireless mediation, which helped us to clarify our respective positions. We wish to thank all delegations that gave us their support in that process. May those delegations rest assured of our deep gratitude.

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to confirm the extension of the appointment of Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for another term of office of four years, beginning on 1 September 2009 and ending on 31 August 2013?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (j) of agenda item 105?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.